

Claims

1. In a computer mediated persistent conversation system having one or more computers with which each of multiple users author and post messages in one or more conversations, the system including a computer-readable medium that stores computer software instructions for operating the system, the improvement comprising:

computer software instructions stored on the computer-readable medium for obtaining selected information from the one or more conversations;

computer software instructions stored on the computer-readable medium for storing the selected information and forming from it aggregated conversation data that includes aggregations according to time, conversation, and authoring user; and

computer software instructions stored on the computer-readable medium for providing the aggregated conversation data to users of the computer mediated persistent conversation system.

2. The system of claim 1 in which the computer mediated persistent conversation system includes any of Usenet (NNTP) newsgroups, World Wide Web (HTTP) message or bulletin board sites, email lists, or online chat rooms.

3. The system of claim 1 in which the computer mediated persistent conversation system includes Usenet (NNTP) newsgroups.

4. The system of claim 1 in which the aggregated conversation data includes plural aggregations according to plural time periods or resolutions.

5. The system of claim 4 in which the plural aggregations according to plural time periods or resolutions include aggregations according to two or more of the time periods or resolutions: day, week, month, quarter, year, year-to-date.

6. The system of claim 1 in which the aggregated conversation data includes plural aggregations according to plural conversation characteristics or identifiers.

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7. The system of claim 6 in which plural conversations are related by plural hierarchical levels of organization, the plural aggregations according to plural conversation characteristics or identifiers including aggregations according to two or more of the hierarchical levels of organization.

8. The system of claim 1 in which the aggregated conversation data includes plural aggregations according to plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers.

9. The system of claim 8 in which the plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers correspond to plural hierarchical levels of authoring user identifier, the plural aggregations according to plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers including aggregations according to two or more of the hierarchical levels of authoring user identifier.

10. The system of claim 1 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message and the aggregated conversation data provided to users includes an indication of a fraction of an authoring user's messages that are replies in a selected one of the conversations relative to the authoring user's reply messages in all of the conversations.

11. The system of claim 1 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message and the aggregated conversation data provided to users includes an indication of a number of replies by an authoring user and a number of initial messages to which replies are posted.

12. The system of claim 1 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message and the aggregated conversation data provided to users includes an indication of a number of days on which an authoring user posted a message in a selected one of the one or more conversations relative to a number of days on which an authoring user posted a message in any of the one or more conversations.

13. The system of claim 1 in which the one or more conversations include messages posted by authoring users, the system

further comprising computer software instructions stored on the computer-readable medium for tagging or identifying the messages when they are posted by authoring users as being of one or more selected message types.

14. The system of claim 13 in which the one or more selected message types include a Question message type indicating that a message is a question and an Answer message type indicating that a message is an answer to a Question message type.

15. The system of claim 14 in which the one or more selected message types includes a Closed message type indicating that a message of the Answer message type resolves a message of the Question message type.

16. The system of claim 13 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message, the one or more selected message types including a Closed message type indicating that a selected reply message resolves the initial message.

17. The system of claim 1 in which the aggregated conversation data are provided to users as a profile that references a selected user or a conversation.

18. In a computer mediated persistent conversation system having one or more computers with which each of multiple users author and post messages in one or more conversations, the system including a computer-readable medium that stores computer software instructions for operating the system, a data structure stored on the computer-readable medium, comprising:

aggregated conversation data from the one or more conversations and including aggregations according to time, conversation, and authoring user, and representing participant evaluation characteristics for a selected user or conversation.

19. The system of claim 18 in which the data structure includes plural aggregations according to plural time periods or resolutions.

20. The system of claim 19 in which the plural aggregations according to plural time periods or resolutions include aggregations according to two or more of the time periods or resolutions: day, week, month, quarter, year, year-to-date.

21. The system of claim 18 in which the data structure includes plural aggregations according to plural conversation characteristics or identifiers.

22. The system of claim 21 in which plural conversations are related by plural hierarchical levels of organization, the plural aggregations according to plural conversation characteristics or identifiers including aggregations according to two or more of the hierarchical levels of organization.

23. The system of claim 18 in which the data structure includes plural aggregations according to plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers.

24. The system of claim 23 in which the plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers correspond to plural hierarchical levels of authoring user identifier, the plural aggregations according to plural authoring user characteristics or identifiers including aggregations according to two or more of the hierarchical levels of authoring user identifier.

25. The system of claim 18 in which the one or more conversations include messages posted by authoring users, the data structure further comprising a message type identifier for identifying the messages when they are posted by authoring users as being of one or more selected message types.

26. The system of claim 25 in which the one or more selected message types include a Question message type indicating that a message is a question and an Answer message type indicating that a message is an answer to a Question message type.

27. The system of claim 26 in which the one or more selected message types includes a Closed message type indicating that a message

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of the Answer message type resolves a message of the Question message type.

28. The system of claim 25 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message, the one or more selected message types including a Closed message type indicating that a selected reply message resolves the initial message.

29. In a computer mediated persistent conversation system having one or more computers with which each of multiple users author and post messages in one or more conversations, the system including a computer-readable medium that stores computer software instructions for operating the system, a user interface rendered on the display screens, comprising:

one or more indications of aggregated conversation data from the one or more conversations and including aggregations according to time, conversation, and authoring user.

30. The system of claim 29 in which the user interface provides indications of plural aggregations according to plural time periods or resolutions.

31. The system of claim 29 in which the one or more conversations include messages posted by authoring users, the user interface further comprising one or more indications for identifying the messages when they are posted by authoring users as being of one or more selected message types.

32. The system of claim 31 in which the one or more selected message types include a Question message type indicating that a message is a question and an Answer message type indicating that a message is an answer to a Question message type.

33. The system of claim 32 in which the one or more selected message types includes a Closed message type indicating that a message of the Answer message type resolves a message of the Question message type.

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34. The system of claim 31 in which one or more reply messages respond to an initial message, the one or more selected message types including a Closed message type indicating that a selected reply message resolves the initial message.

35. In a computer mediated persistent conversation system having one or more computers with which each of multiple users author and post messages in one or more conversations, a method comprising:

obtaining selected information from the one or more conversations;

storing the selected information and forming from it aggregated conversation data that includes aggregations according to time, conversation, and authoring user; and

providing the aggregated conversation data to users of the computer mediated persistent conversation system.

36. The method of claim 35 in which the computer mediated persistent conversation system includes any of Usenet (NNTP) newsgroups, World Wide Web (HTTP) message or bulletin board sites, email lists, or online chat rooms.

37. The method of claim 35 in which the computer mediated persistent conversation system includes Usenet (NNTP) newsgroups.

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